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ment not arbitrarily limited to any prescribed channels. Since the welfare of democracy is something to be worked out by men themselves, the God of a democratic religion must be a co-worker, an intimate companion, rather than a transcendent Absolute. The Great War, with its shattering of conventional complacency, has made men more than ever conscious of the need of such fellowship

with an immanent divine power. Are not the main traits of a democratic religious experience already becoming evident? Is not the time ripe for a confident, positive reconstruction of Christianity in accord with democratic demands?

Our next study will be concerned with the relation between democratic ideals and church organization.

THE NATURE OF SPIRIT AND ITS BEARING UPON INSPIRATION

H. C. ACKERMAN, D.B.

Professor of Old Testament in Nashotah House, Nashotah, Wisconsin

I purpose in this paper to define inspiration from the standpoint of spirit conceived as energy, or force in operation. The standardized conceptions of the nature of spirit are so involved with spirituality in the abstract that it is difficult to determine with any degree of exactness what the essential reality embodied in the concept is. It is understood in an obscure way that spirit is an element in the soul, its highest constituent; but its nature is generally apprehended so elusively as to prohibit successful definition. Because of this vagueness we have been content to substitute the term soul for that of spirit in common use, and thus surrender the distinctive reality of spirit to the mercy of logical abstractions or to dissipate its being into mere qualities of spirituality. Let one ask himself what he means by spirituality and it will be recognized at

once how susceptible the term spirituality is to indefinite connotation.

The conception of soul also has suffered much throughout the history of religious thought, but less than that of spirit; for fortunately we are always driven, sooner or later, to the simple Hebrew notion of soul as the living organism (cf. Gen. 2:7). Soul therefore is inclusive of spirit, or rather it is matter and spirit in unity. Consequently the point of departure for an investigation of the nature of spirit itself should be the correct understanding of the nature of soul.

But here the notion of what spirit is halts. To attempt to discern more exactly what spirit is we should go back beyond the idea of soul as a living organism and trace the initial meaning of the term spirit apart from the composite structure of soul. The word *ruah*

is derived from the root **נָחַח** "to breathe," more particularly to breathe through the nostrils. Hence the first derivative, "to smell." From the concrete sense of smelling was obtained the notion of sensation itself, or sense perception; and from perception the idea easily took on a higher significance, namely, the perception of truth and ideals; and out of this final development all the abstractions that are connoted by spirituality inhere. For example, there is the "manly spirit" (Prov. 18:14), the "spirit of firmness" (Ps. 51:12), the "spirit of justice" (Isa. 28:6), the "spirit of purpose" (Exod. 35:21), the "spirit of understanding" (Exod. 28:3), the "spirit of courage" (Hab. 1:11), the "spirit of goodness" (Neh. 9:20), etc.

It is clear that to attempt to reach the reality consistently underlying abstract generalizations of spirituality we should retrace the steps of this process of logical development and concentrate intensively upon the original meaning of the term. This elemental concept was that of breath. Thus we find *ruah* also meaning wind, since the motion of the air and the inward or outward rush of the breath seemed identical in essence. First, however, this identification took place through the likeness to a slight breeze (cf. Gen. 3:8, "God walking in the *ruah* of the day"), and then passed on to the more forceful wind of the storm (cf. Gen. 8:1, "God made a *ruah* to pass over the earth"), and finally to that of the tempest (cf. Job 1:18).

Now the air was supposed to be put into motion by the *ruah*, or breath, of God. Cf. Exod. 15:8, "With the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered

together." See also Isa. 40:7, "The flower fadeth because the *ruah* of Yahweh bloweth upon it." It is also the breath (**נְשָׁמָה**) of Yahweh which supplied the faculty of life in the soul (cf. Gen. 2:7); and what is more, this breath is the breath of spirit (**נְשֵׁמַת-רוּחַ**) (Gen. 7:22). Finally, notice the expression in Gen. 1:2b, "the *ruah* of Elohim was causing a trembling upon the face of the waters."

The Semitic conception of the significance of breath was that of vital energy or organic causation. The life of the flesh was in the blood, but the life in a more primary and elemental sense was in the breath. The breathing process, taken in conjunction with the organism as a whole, became designated as *nephesh* ("soul"). However, the conception of the nature of vital energy was not limited to organic life solely; it was highly generalized to connote the life of the world at large, that is, existence itself. And this energy was not even limited to the principle of order, but denoted correlatively the principle, or spirit, of disorder also; for example, chaos. In other words, spirit might be inherently orderly (good) or disorderly. Wherever the "evil spirit" occurs the lack of harmony and soundness is indicated.

Whereas the notion of soul was always qualified by some specific manifestation of life, the idea of spirit was for the most part unqualified and unindividualized, or perhaps qualified in as specific a manner as the air which was breathed might be. Still spirit did not denote air simply, but air in motion; and it was this movement, the force of the wind or breath, which constituted the distinctive feature of

spirit. In its widest connotation then spirit implied a dynamic principle; so in modern terminology spirit would be equivalent to force operative, or energy. However, since the Semitic mind dealt with the concrete rather than the abstract, it could handle the force factor only in the form of its particular manifestations, and accordingly it expressed this reality as breath or wind. No doubt, though, the clear conception of energy, *qua* energy, was not attained; but the Semite did none the less perceive the fact, so naïvely defined, that there was energy, spirit, in all living beings and in the material world generally. The concrete aspect of spirit as breath or wind became a practical metaphor for the more elemental and indefinable reality quickening all things into movement and life. The "breath of God" (spirit of Elohim) qualified absolute spirit in the form of the creative force of ordered rational existence—most conspicuous, of course, in human nature.

To trace the usage of this term through Scripture in its manifold meanings and subtle distinctions and learn the various ways in which this fundamental reality was interpreted¹ should not blind us to the exact nature of the thing which was so changingly and progressively defined. If our investigation of the essence of the *ruah* is sound, we should hold firmly to the idea of energy as primary and indispensable for further elucidations of all that spirituality in its widest connotation implies. And the assurance that we possess in this notion of energy a term as valid in the religious realm as in the

scientific field should favor the validity of our conclusions.

This conclusion therefore throws light upon the meaning of inspiration. To be inspired by the spirit in a religious sense is simply to be full of a particular form of energy. The mind, for example, is inspired when it is alive with intellectual energy, and all intelligent interest amounts to inspiration when the attention becomes exceedingly keen. Thus there is the natural inspiration of poetry and art and mechanical science, and there is the *natural* inspiration in religion when the mind is absorbed in just those particular interests which pertain to God and moral ends. For religious inspiration is a specific kind of inspiration and should be approached from the standpoint of inspiration in general. A mind that is inactive and intellectually static, or unenergetic, devoid of quickening ideas, has but little or no spirit.

Consequently we may not speak of being moved (inspired) by the "inbreathing of the spirit," since the "inbreathing" and spirit itself are literally identical; nor may we use an expression like "spiritual force" without ambiguity, since this is tautological, a mere repetition of synonymous terms and meaningless. What is truly implied is that the mind is active and fully alive with thought. When, therefore, we lose ourselves in the exciting interest of religious problems we are by virtue of that intellectual excitement truly inspired, and only such rational enthusiasm is productive of religious truth.

Some conclusions may be drawn from the foregoing view of the nature of religious inspiration: First, inspiration

¹ Cf. Burton, *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh*.

may or may not be infallible, that is, mental activity may or may not formulate truths of value; but whatever truth is formulated and systematized is apprehended in precisely this way, namely, when the mind gets busy, so to speak. Secondly, inspiration may take place in dreams, though not often, for the sleeper whose mind runs riot may hit upon some striking idea to be developed upon waking—provided that he remembers. Thirdly, the normal state of inspiration is vision, or truth-seeing, and the man of vision is he who abandons himself to a stimulating thought and pursues it loyally to the end.

The problem that will be suggested at once by this theory of inspiration is that of the "false prophets." Are we to grant them a measure of inspiration? The answer is, Yes, a measure, but not necessarily the kind of religious inspiration that is worth much so far as original contributions are concerned. The prophets, to whom moral ideas make an irresistible appeal, will obviously be in a class by themselves, a class of persons

whose nature is aflame with the sense of justice and mercy, being carried away with the supremacy of God's righteousness and accordingly able to create and establish a religion of value. However brilliant the talents of others who fail in moral character to be attracted by the potent ideals of humanity are, their ability and propaganda will be wasted in the end. The community which judges and pronounces upon genuine inspiration will, as history testifies, unerringly set its approval on that noble order which has the best interests of mankind as a whole at heart. It is not a question of degrees of inspiration; it is rather a matter of just what kind of ideas are pursued and what is the nature of the particular interest.

It may be inferred, then, on the ground that spirit is the force or energy which pervades the world, primary and irreducible in essence, that in the field of religious inspiration it is that stirring *interest* in ideas and ideals of God and man which leads to the discovery and foundation of the most efficient religion.